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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000141

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [LE](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: SENIOR ALGERIAN MFA OFFICIAL DOWNBEAT ON LEBANON,
WON'T BLAME ONLY SYRIA

REF: A. STATE 10786

[1](#)B. 07 ALGIERS 1808

Classified By: Ambassador Robert S. Ford, reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) MFA Director General for Arab Affairs Bouzaher (A/S equivalent) told Ambassador February 6 that the political situation in Lebanon looked deadlocked and that the Algerian Government was not hopeful that the Arab League would succeed in paving the way for a presidential election. Bouzaher said the Algerian Government supported the Arab League effort. That said, Bouzaher expressed doubt that Amre Moussa could succeed. The insistence of the two competing factions that the other offer larger compromises makes finding a way forward practically impossible, he asserted. Bouzaher expressed some sympathy with what he called the Syrian response to Amre Moussa that Syria only was being asked to lean on its Lebanese allies and not the other external states with influence. Saudi Arabia, Iran, France and the U.S. all have influence too, Bouzaher observed. Ambassador rejoined that the KSA, the U.S. and France wanted the Arab League to succeed. Only Iran and Syria seek to block Amre Moussa's effort. Bouzaher did not argue the point beyond saying that the Syrians officially support the Arab League initiative and that all sides need to make concessions. He also acknowledged in a quiet aside that the Algerian authorities do not really understand the dynamics of Lebanese politics, but they want to maintain a stance perceived as neutral by all sides.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador highlighted our support for the Special Tribunal as well as for the Lebanese security forces and Lebanese economic needs. He urged that the Algerians consider material support as well as issuing public statements in support of Siniora's government. Bouzaher noted that the Algerian government had issued no public statements about Lebanon so far. Similarly, there was no bilateral Algerian assistance to Lebanon now. While he could give no definitive answer, he was dubious that Algeria would change its allegedly neutral stance.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Our sense is that Bouzaher is influential within the ministry on Middle East issues. Foreign Minister Medelci, who is a finance/economics technocrat, has little experience with issues like the Arab League or the Middle East. Bouzaher has worked in several Arab capitals (most recently as ambassador in the UAE). Bouzaher and the Algerian ambassador in Cairo, an older Arab nationalist named Abdelkader Hadjar, probably carry the most weight when President Bouteflika (another old-style Arab nationalist) and Medelci seek advice. Bouzaher himself has a full workload, and the Lebanon dossier does not figure on his priority list. The background paper in ref A had much information that was clearly new to Bouzaher and his notetakers. The biggest problem with Algeria on Lebanon is that Bouteflika and his aides want to maintain their pious stance of neutrality and maintain good relations with Syria. (Syria, for example, is important to Algerian efforts to interdict movement of

Algerian jihadis moving between Algeria and Iraq.) Our feeding more information to Bouzaher about Lebanon is useful in getting the GoA to take another look at its stance. It would also be helpful for other Arab states, and Siniora's government, to keep nudging the Algerians to support Amre Moussa more strongly.

FORD